

*The*  
**Short Course**  
*for the*  
**Christian Family**

*by*  
*Brad Sherman*

# **The Short Course for the Christian Family**

by Brad Sherman

© copyright 2003-2005  
Brad Sherman

Purpose Ministries  
P.O. Box 5004  
Coralville, Iowa 52241

[www.GetPurpose.org](http://www.GetPurpose.org)

# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ..... 4

**Chapter 1**  
**Basic Family Order** ..... 5

**Chapter 2**  
**Attitude Toward Children** ..... 7

**Chapter 3**  
**Raising Children** ..... 10

**Chapter 4**  
**Discipline and Corporal Punishment?** ..... 12

## Introduction

The institution of marriage and the basic order that God has laid out for the family intense attack. That is because strong families are the backbone of the Church and Satan hates the church. In many ways, it seems our society has sided with Satan and is bent on undermining the family. Many child psychology "experts" contradict Biblical discipline. Anti-Christian bias is in government, schools, the news media, and entertainment. Family values are being attacked at ever turn. Premarital sex is presented as the norm, divorce is rampant (when people even bother to marry before they live together), and there is a strong move to get society to accept homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

However, God has a plan for the family. Even as Christians, we must guard ourselves against the forces that subtly undermine biblical family values. We must remember that His plan is designed for *our* good. Those who follow His plan enjoy blessings while those who disregard His plan experience multiplied heartache. Those who follow His plan enjoy the benefits of his blessing in many ways.

In Deuteronomy, chapter thirty, God says:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live, that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land..."(Deuteronomy 30:19,20 NKJV).

Nowhere is this more true than in the context of family order.

This *Short Course for the Christian Family* will certainly not address every issue concerning the family. It is not a replacement for wise counsel that is often needed in difficult circumstances. However, it will provide a general outline of God's order that, if followed, will preclude many of the difficult circumstances that family today are facing. Coupled with humble seeking prayer, this book will be very helpful.

## **Chapter One: Basic Family Order**

### **Order for Husband and Wife.**

God's plan for the family starts with the basic order for the husband and wife. There must be a leadership structure in any institution to insure harmony. When everyone agrees, this leadership structure seems irrelevant, but when opinions differ, someone has to lead to prevent chaos. This basic plan is described in Ephesians chapter five.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5:23-27,33).

Volumes have been written about the working out of this order, so we won't go into it deeply here. However, I will say that these verses do not mean that the wife is to be a "door mat" or a slave. Many men in our society have treated their wives this way and in doing so have failed to be real men, not to mention spiritual leaders of their families. Instead they have been overgrown selfish children. The real man lays his life down for his wife as Christ did the church and takes responsibility for and sees that she is ministered to properly, spiritually and otherwise.

On the other hand, many wives have been impatient and have unintentionally (and sometimes intentionally) sought to control their families and their husbands and have failed to walk in divine order. This can happen for many different reasons, fear of domination by their husbands, impatience due to a lack leadership by their husbands, or just a wrong attitude as a result of wrong teaching or understanding. For the wife to be subject to her husband does not mean she cannot play an active part in the leadership of the family.

There is a God-ordained order for the family. Husband and wife as parents, are intended by God to be the leadership team of the family. When both husband and wife desire to walk in that proper order, there is peace and security for both. If both are in a relationship with Christ and sincerely seek to do all unto the glory of God, this order between the husband and wife is not hard to achieve or burdensome to bear.

### **Order for Children**

Ephesians continues in chapter six with instruction about divine order for children in the family.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou

mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).

As much as to children (or more) these verses are instructional to parents. When children are old enough to understand, they should certainly be instructed with these verses, but it is the parents job to teach them obedience and respect by expecting and enforcing obedience before they are older. In doing so, they insure blessing and long life for their children. For a parent not to enforce and therefore fail to teach these principle is to fail to love them and actually hate them! As proverbs says; He who spares his rod hates his son: but he who loves him disciplines him diligently (Prov.13:24 NAS). The balance to discipline is not to provoke our children. Discipline must be done in a Godly way.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Attitude Toward Children**

#### **Two Extremes**

Two extreme attitudes exist in our society toward children. Neither are good and both can subtly creep into our families if we are not careful.

#### *An Inconvenience?*

We live in a society where children are too often treated as an inconvenience. This is not overtly stated, but is loudly proclaimed in numerous ways. For example, families are often started much later in life than they were just a generation ago. People often place career and financial goals ahead of starting their families. This is often done with the idea of being able to better provide for the children, but I suspect that there are often selfish goals mixed in as well. The fact that the average family only has about 2 children may be a reflection of this. The millions of babies that are being murdered in abortion clinics are simply a human sacrifice to the god of convenience. Abortion is simply a testimony to the selfishness of our generation.

The fact that so many parents delegate child care and training to others also speaks loudly concerning how a society views children. We have professional day-care, public schools, baby sitters, the electronic pacifier (TV and video games) and even Sunday School. All these can be used excessively or for the wrong motive.

Television and video games have become the babysitters of this generation. The results are not good. Children on a steady diet of TV and video games are used to maximum entertainment having grown accustomed to nonstop action at the rate of 40-50 frames a minute.

With too much entertainment, a child can lose touch with reality. It is no wonder that children can't sit still for 1 hour beside their parents in a church meeting without driving their parents crazy. With a 30 second attention span, how can they get anything out of a church meeting anyway? It is no surprise that children are hyperactive and have attention deficit disorders. There are legitimate cases of attention deficit disorder, but I suspect many of the ADHD cases are really due to a discipline deficit instead of a physiological problem.

Let's be real. We can't compete on the natural level with the world and a multi-billion dollar entertainment industry for our children's attention. So let's don't try! Maybe the simple things like turning off the TV, staying home, and reading would produce huge benefits. This is where we as parents often need discipline, as well as our children.

#### *Child Worship?*

On the other extreme, we often see parents that are so consumed by doing everything for their children that what the child "needs" becomes the first and foremost priority in their lives, a position that belongs to God! Children can get so involved in extracurricular activities that home life starts to revolve around the children with parents simply becoming the facilitators of the child's lifestyle.

Of course, it is good and healthy for children to be involved in certain activities. We don't want them to be isolated from the world. Sometimes these activities require some sacrifice by parents. But some parents let their kids (or even encourage them) to do too much.

Sports can be one of the most consuming things. There is basketball, football, soccer, baseball, gymnastics, dance, and martial arts classes. And then, some coaches often feel our kids should be totally committed to the sport and expect them to miss any other activity, including church, if schedules conflict. There are also other activities too numerous to mention. If we are not careful, we can get caught up into a fast-paced "world-of-our-children" that can begin to control our lives.

Because of the culture we live in, our children can sometimes get the idea that they are being slighted if they don't get to do what all the other kids are doing. They can become masters at projecting a kind of guilt upon their parents that can become a controlling spirit. Unwise parents can come under this spirit of control without even knowing it, thinking they are simply being good parents.

Another aspect of "child worship" is parents who try to live out their dreams and ideas through their children. It is almost as if they are trying to extend their own youth through their children. I have seen fathers who apply unbearable pressure trying to live out their unfulfilled sports goals and dreams through their sons. Mothers too, who entertain too many romantic ideas, have unwisely encouraged daughters down the path of romance. It is as if the daughter's romantic life becomes Mom's real-life soap opera.

Children don't need everything they want. They need their parents to love them and teach them godly values and encourage them toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. They need to be taught to honor their parents and learn to be content in whatever circumstance they are in.

## **God's Attitude Toward Children**

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Ps. 127:3-5).

This verse reflects the truth that children are a part of God's larger purpose and that we should be training, or aiming them toward, that purpose. In our society, even among Christians, very few parents view posterity in light of God's purpose. Today the average family has two children. I can remember when my wife and I announced that we were expecting our fourth, some people's reaction was almost one of sympathy as though we had contracted some terrible disease!

There is nothing wrong with having only two children, but there is nothing wrong with having more either. What is important is that we have a God-centered attitude toward them, however many we have. Instead of an inconvenience or an object of worship, children

should be loved and cherished as a reward from God and trained, like arrows aimed at God's purpose.

As parents we need to seek God and find the proper attitude toward our children. They are not an inconvenience, nor should they be the central focus of our lives.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Raising Children**

#### **Who is Responsible for Training Children?**

The Bible teaches that children are the responsibility of parents. Just as it is clearly the responsibility of the husband to minister to and present the wife spiritually clean, It is then the parents responsibility to present the children to God. We are instructed by scripture to: Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov 22:6).

#### **Training Children Is Not Easy**

Recognizing the error what has, in many cases, become "normal" in our society and our churches is important. Before anyone can change wrong behavior, they must first recognize it to be wrong. We must also learn what God has to say about these issues. However, simply recognizing a thing to be wrong can just bring condemnation if we do not also discover how to apply Biblical truth to the circumstance.

Training children in a Godly fashion is not easy. In fact anything we attempt to do in a Godly fashion will likely be met with difficulty. The culture we live in seems to resist us at every turn. This is because we have an enemy who is a thief who has come to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). There will always be spiritual warfare involved in doing God's will.

#### **Taught by Demonstration**

All of us, especially children, learn by observation. Therefore, one of the most important things we can do as parents is model or demonstrate our Christianity in our daily lives. This cannot be done simply by choosing to act out the Biblical model for the purpose of "training time." Children see through that too easily. Our model must be real, it must be part of our everyday lives. If we will produce genuine believers then we must be genuine believers. None of us have "arrived" yet, but as we demonstrate sincere effort and especially confess our faults and make apologies to our children when needed, that too is a powerful example!

None of us are perfect parents. So, admitting our failures as parents and asking for our children's forgiveness (when they are old enough to understand) is also a powerful example. Perfection is not a prerequisite for good leadership, but honesty, humility, and sincerity are.

#### **Clear Boundaries**

Are you teaching your children that your first "no" doesn't really mean no? Maybe you will train your child that it is the second, or maybe the third "no" with a raised voice that really means no? If this the case, it is probably because clear boundaries do not exist and enforcement is based on the parents emotional state. This usually means that the parents' rule for "When the child gets disciplined" is "When I'm so angry and frustrated I can't take it any

more!"

A child disciplined out of anger doesn't learn right from wrong, they only learn; "When Mom or Dad is angry, I catch it!" That is not fair to the child and it only creates more frustration for the parent.

Without boundaries clearly defined and enforced, children do not know what their boundaries are and will constantly test their limits—and yours. If we parents don't define our children's boundaries by faithful enforcement they will frustrate us and wear us out!

Giving our children clear boundaries with consistent enforcement is perhaps one of the single most important things we can do for them. Already mentioned was teaching young children that your no means no and your “yes” means “yes.” The principles here are respect for authority, leadership, and trust. When we tell them “no” they learn to listen to and respect authority above their own will. When we say yes and keep our promises, they learn to, not only respect your authority, but trust you as well.

Again, there is perhaps no principle so important as this one. Children need to learn that your words carry authority. The benefits of this are far reaching. Imparted early, this will give them a natural understanding that lying is wrong. It will cause them to respect, not only your word, but the Word of God. It will also give them have a proper attitude toward heavenly authorities, as well as earthly authorities, and keep them out of a lot of trouble.

I have seen little children speak with demanding disrespecting tones to their parents and the parents simply ignore it and treat it as if it were cute. There is nothing cute about it. It is a shame to that parent.

Again, when we fail to provide a clear signal to our children by not having uniform enforcement patterns, being their adventuresome selves, they will constantly feel and test for where the boundaries are and try your patience. So do yourself and your children a favor and make some clear boundaries and enforcement rules.

Setting boundaries doesn't have to be an exhaustive list of dos and don'ts. In fact it shouldn't be! Children need some room to explore and learn without you looking over their shoulder, more so as they grow (more on this issue below). Identify the basic foundational principles, set the boundaries and stick to them.

I once saw a chapter title in a book on Child rearing called: *Inconsistency or How to Raise Yo Yo's*. The key is consistency.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discipline and Corporal Punishment?**

#### **Nonproductive Forms of Discipline**

There are many different kinds of discipline that parents have used. Some are good and some are counterproductive. Discipline done with anger is not always bad, but discipline solely from anger is. A child should be aware that certain behavior can create anger in their parents. However, that anger should be controlled and governed by biblical principles and convictions. Some of the methods that I believe to be counterproductive, are yelling, name calling, belittling, isolation, and corporal punishment without coinciding ministry.

This is not to say that we shouldn't raise our voices at times. If little Johnny is about to step in front of a car, we use a different tone that if we are asking him to "pass the butter" at the dinner table. We should yell "STOP!" at the top of our lungs. But if we have trained him that yelling is just what Mom or Dad does, then he probably won't even slow down at the edge of the street. In fact, he might speed up!

There is no place for belittling a child or calling a child derogatory names.

Another common form of discipline that I take issue with is isolation. Children in rebellion or who have broken a rule need to be restored to right standing with their parents, or with whomever the transgression was against. It is a parallel to sin and punishment. God chastises those he loves (see Heb 12:6), but he also forgives and seek to restore relationship with us when we sin. "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool." (Is 1:18).

But to send a child to their room does not remove their guilt or restore relationship. It is more likely to cause rejection, anger, and cause a child to develop a wrong view of God Himself.

Corporal punishment is a big issue in our humanistic culture. Therefore I will spend more time on that below. But for now, it will suffice to say that spanking or hitting a child in a wrong way or out of anger is not productive or godly.

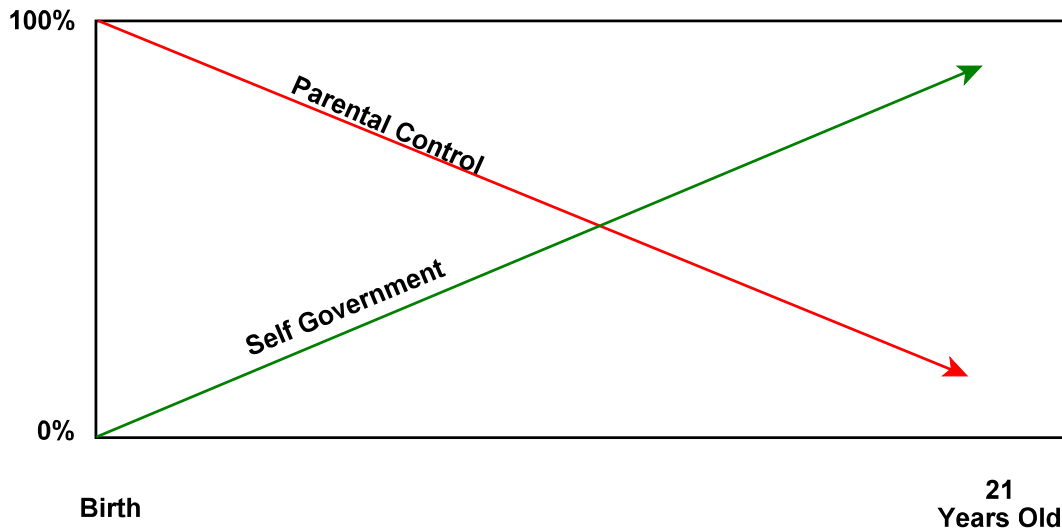
#### **Productive Discipline**

Productive methods of discipline would include, privileges, rewards and biblical spanking. Privilege and reward systems should not be misunderstood. Telling little Johnny, "Pick up your toys and I will take you to get ice cream." is not a reward, it is bribery. We should never bribe our children to do what they should do anyway. Privilege, means that, as parents, we give our children privileges (privileges are not rights). But if they break our rules, privileges can be lost. Rewards are all about teaching children the value of work and self-discipline.

The relationship between spanking and a privilege/reward system of discipline is similar the relationship between parental control and self-government. Children start out

needing 100% parental control. But as they grow up, they learn self-government and parental control decreases. Somewhere around age 21, we expect our responsibility to control our children's lives to be reduced to nearly 0% and simply offer advice from time to time. And they will definitely need advice long after age 21.

Many secular "experts" are saying that spanking is psychologically damaging to



children. Some even call it child abuse and in some cases good parents have even been investigated for child abuse by government social workers simply because someone saw them spanking their child and reported them. In extreme cases, good Christian parents have even had their children taken away from them for spanking! A needed and properly administered spanking done in love is in no way child abuse.

One of the most important rules to remember when spanking is necessary is to do it in love. If the emotions are not under control, then wait. Spanking a child out of control could actually result in abuse!

The goal in a spanking or any other form of discipline is to get a specific point across to the child, to teach them something of value. A spanking does not just consist of turning the child over the knee and swatting them; it is also a time of ministry, communication and prayer.

The purpose of a spanking is to cause enough pain to teach the child to associate the dread of punishment with wrong doing. This lays the foundation for self-control in the child which will enable them to stand firm against the storms of temptation the will assail them later in life.

Therefore, before the spanking, the child should understand why he is being spanked and after the spanking there should be prayer, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The actual time that it takes to swat a child may be only 2 or 3 seconds, but when you include the time before and after, it usually takes at least 5 minutes and sometimes 15 or 20.

Just as sin created a separation between man and God, likewise, transgression of a

boundary or rebellion in a child creates a separation in the relationship between a parent and a child. Therefore, discipline must be aimed at restoring that relationship. Simply spanking a child without reconciliation ministry, holding, loving, explaining, praying, etc., will fall short of that goal.

A child who knows what the boundaries are, and transgresses them, automatically comes under guilt and condemnation, that is a universal principle. When a child receives punishment for his transgression (which stands for restitution) and receives forgiveness and acceptance from his parents, that guilt and condemnation is then removed.

It is hard to teach the theological significance of this to a child, explaining how Jesus paid for our transgression (made the restitution) and now we can receive forgiveness and acceptance with God. However, as we obey God and do not spare the rod when it is needed and love them and pray with them, then this eternal principle is being taught and ingrained in their spirits. Then when the time comes that they can be taught these principles academically, the truth of it will be much easily received.

Again, the purpose in discipline is restitution, forgiveness, and restoration of relationship with the authority figure. For that reason, I believe "time out" or sending a child to his or her room is not an acceptable alternative for spanking when spanking is needed. That only causes the child to feel rejected and isolated and experience further separation. In many cases the child will resent the parent even more for this real or perceived rejection. Our spiritual enemies will also likely also be there to accuse the parent to the child and offer a whole array of ungodly thoughts for which the child has no defense.

Teaching a child to just sit, preferably in the room with you, can, at times, can be good.. This sort of "time out" can be productive as a lesson in self-control, especially if he or she is just too "worked up" and simply needs to calm down more than receive punishment for rebellion. But temper tantrums and intentional rebellious behavior should be handled with the rod of discipline and restoration should be reestablished as soon as possible.

### **Instruments for Spanking**

Many people recommend different instruments for administering a spanking. However, the Bible says ... spare not **the rod**. There is nothing better than a thin rod that is easily broken. I can remember my parents talking about having to go out and cut a switch for their own spanking from the peach tree when they needed a spanking.

A thin rod is only capable of hurting "skin deep." Other objects such as paddles, wooden spoons, and even the hand are heavy and could bruise or hurt a child deeper than the skin. This is especially true if a child is squirming or fighting against the spanking. The natural padding of the child's behind may provide sufficient protection, but if the child quickly turns or if a little hand slips in the way, a heavy instrument could injure the child. A thin dowel rod or switch will sting but cannot seriously injure. It may make a small red mark but that will disappear with in a few hours.

It is best to remove the diaper and spank on the bare skin. That way, very little force is needed to achieve the desired result. It is also a good idea to try your rod on yourself first so you know how it feels. As children get older, remove only enough clothing to allow the rod to do its job. As children get older, modesty can also become an issue. Having the child

bend over usually clothing to stretch tightly enough across the skin that the rod will still sting.

A good rule is this: use the rod to minister discipline and the hand to minister love and acceptance. It is much better for the child to associate punishment with a non personal object like the rod, that with your hand. However, the hand will suffice if a rod is not available. Discipline should not be avoided for the lack of an instrument, just be careful to use care and love.

### **When Should I Spank?**

In general, spanking should be done when the child clearly disobeys a known rule or boundary or where there is a direct act of rebellion against a parent or another elder. For instance, my Children have NEVER gotten by with using the word "No" to me or my wife. Whenever one of my children has exerted their will against mine by saying "No" or by any disrespectful remark, a spanking is automatic.

This is a foundational character issue that must be built into a child from an early age. Don't be slack here! Honoring parents is the first and foremost thing that a child must. It is the first commandment with a promise, that the child will do well and have a long life (Eph. 6:1-3). Other clear boundaries should also be established according to many situations and circumstances.

On the other hand, don't be a "spank-a-holic." Some parents set so many boundaries that the poor child could never remember them all! The goal is not to produce a child who never makes a mistake, but rather to build principle and character in the child. If the child knows a few clear boundaries and you enforce them without fail, they will learn character. But if you have too many rules, at least two things can happen.

First, the child will not be capable of obeying them all and they will end up getting spanked for simple mistakes instead of acts of rebellion. This is counter productive and wounds the child's spirit and causes them to be insecure about exploring and being creative.

Second, you will not be able to consistently enforce more than a few rules consistently and this will present a double standard to the child and create confusion. In other words, with too many boundaries, boundaries become unclear which is the same as having no boundaries. This creates confusion and insecurity in the child which is a poor atmosphere for learning.

Spanking is not the only form of discipline. A major goal is to teach them submission to and respect for authority. Therefore, I have at times simply sat and held a child who was squirming and bucking trying to get down. At times I have held a child like this for up to 30 to 40 minutes simply reading a book, singing, etc., before the child realizes that I am bigger, stronger and more determined and so they might as well submit and enjoy life.

The child's will must learn to bend! It is not the goal to break the will of a child, but to make it flexible. The child must learn that they can control their own will. A child who's will is rigid is in for big trouble later on in life. Children must learn to accept things that they cannot change with a good attitude.

Some children are more strong-willed than others. The rod is designed to break the stubborn will. Children who don't respond to the rod are rare, if they even exist. If the rod is not getting a child's attention, it probably isn't hurting enough. The rod, administered

correctly with appropriate ministry *will* bring a child's will into submission.

### At What Age Do I Begin Spanking?

There is no set age when a child is old enough to be spanked. The general rule to use is this: *When they are old enough to rebel, they are old enough to be spanked.* If they are old enough to back-talk you and say “no”, they are old enough to be spanked. Most all children are clearly demonstrating their ability to rebel by the time they are one year old. Of course, spanking a one year old is to be done very very gently, just enough for them to get the message. A much smaller thinner rod should also be used for younger children.

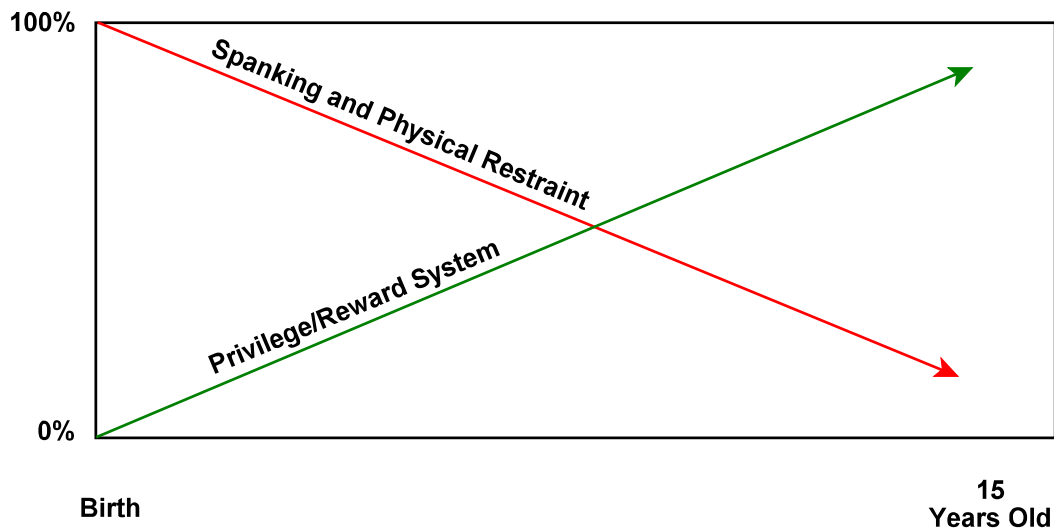
Discipline should be as immediate as possible, but especially with very young children so they will associate the punishment with the wrong committed. If you wait, they won't know why they are being punished and they won't learn anything. As a parent, you will know if they are making the connection.

With older children, it may be good to wait, especially if you are angry and feel you need to “cool down.” If they are old enough to fully understand, it doesn't hurt for them to think awhile about the punishment that is coming.

I have often used a “mark” system with my kids, especially when I am in a place where I cannot administer discipline immediately. If they “cross the line”, I tell them, “You have a mark.” They came to understand the when I said that, a spanking was absolutely sure. I taught them that marks are only erased by swats. The more marks, the more swats. Once they learned I was serious, they would straighten right up when I told them they were close to “getting a mark.” And, when I did give them a mark, they suddenly became very serious and lost the desire to act out. They were thinking about the punishment to come.

### Too Old to Spank?

Boundaries change as a child grows older and matures. There also comes a time when you just can't spank anymore. By the time children reach the teen years, they are naturally



moving away from choices being made for them by their parents to making decisions for themselves. Spanking becomes less an option and should be replaced by counsel and advice.

The age of 15 years (see graph) is certainly not an exact number. I know parents who have spanked their kids past that age but most seem to stop a few years earlier. The goal of course is to train children when they are young so they will have a humble and submissive attitude that will receive counsel instead of control. If this kind of character has not been formed in them and the child chooses to rebel, attempts to spank may only embitter the child and create more rebellion. Certain house rules must still be enforced, but when it comes to changing the will, the rod must be replaced by prayer and counsel.

### **Adolescence—A Difficult Time!**

The teen years are very difficult for our kids. I remember the adolescence years, but not with fond memories. The body is maturing faster than the mind, creating the desire to be an adult while still being a kid. This naturally a time of insecurity and trepidation that creates a desire to fit in. This makes kids extremely vulnerable to peer pressure and influence from ungodly sources. Pressure from ungodly sources are all around them. They usually have at least a friend or two who has not been brought up with the same standards. This “freedom” seems very attractive to them.

As little ones, nothing Mom and Dad did was wrong. But now, they are at an age where they are beginning to think for themselves and make decisions on their own, as they should. This means they will begin to recognize Mom and Dad’s faults. This provides opportunity for critical attitudes and disrespect toward their parents. Most all teens deal with to some degree.

Thrown into this mix is the fact that they do not have the benefit of experience and we can understand why teens sometimes make wrong choices and come to wrong conclusions. The fact is they simply don’t have enough information to make good choices. Yet they are so sure that their logic is correct.

This is why it is so important to maintain relationship and communication with teens, even if they are not following the rules. As long as there are channels of communication, there is a possibility of providing them good information and advice. But if communication breaks down, there is little chance they will get the benefit of our experience.

### **Who Does the Spanking?**

As a general rule, when Dad is present he should administer the discipline. This simply reinforces the biblical order for the family. The father is the authority figure in the home and when he clearly and lovingly stands and demonstrates that authority to the children, they develop a healthy attitude toward authority—and toward God.

In some cases, especially when the children are a little older, Mom might want to wait and let Dad do the discipline when he gets home. This allows Dad to demonstrate support for Mom and makes her job easier when he isn't there. It also teaches the children an important lesson on obeying delegated authority and teaches them the principle that although punishment may not be immediate, punishment is inevitable for wrong doing.

## **Children in Church Meetings**

It will always be necessary to have some form of children's ministry during church gatherings, especially for the very young ones. But since Children learn by observation, it is also important that they learn to sit quietly at times and develop an attention span of reasonable length. The ability to listen and hear is a valuable asset that will serve them through their whole lives! They may surprise us as to how much they get out of a sermon!

When training children to sit quietly in the adult meetings, there will be times when they will get out of line and need to be disciplined. When they get out of line, take them out, minister to them appropriately and bring them back! If they get their way (which might be to go out and play), even with discipline, we have not taught them anything except that if they will endure a little finger shaking in the face, or even a spanking, they can still have their way! We do not want to teach them that they can have their way for a price, but to accept authority.

Training doesn't happen over night and all children are different. But with a little perseverance according to biblical principles, and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can do it. If a parent begins to train a child to sit in church meetings with them at age 2, they can easily be trained by age 3. The result will be great peace for us and our children.

## **Helps in the Meeting**

Teaching young ones to sit quietly does not mean they have act like adults. For very young ones, small toys can be brought to keep them occupied (soft non-noisy ones please, toy tambourines, and things that are loud when dropped defeat the purpose). For those who are little older, paper and pencil or a few crayons (not the box of 256 colors) are good.

Many adults have bad childhood memories of sitting in church meeting and being bored to tears and therefore object to making their children sit in church meetings. I was one of those children. However, because I learned to endure, things that were happening in church went into my heart, even though I didn't what to be there sometimes.

Interaction can also be helpful. Communicate with them during the sermon, it's okay to talk quietly. Encourage them to draw according to what is being said from the front. I have been pleasantly surprised by some of the pictures that children have shown me after my sermons. For example, if the minister mentions Jesus preaching from a boat, ask your child if they can draw a picture of Jesus in a boat on the sea. This can lead to some good conversations later about the sermon.

Children also love to dance during praise time - dance with them! Then, when the mood of the worship changes, tell them "Dance time is over now." If you see the meeting as a time to teach as well as a time to be taught, both of you will get more out of the meeting.

Training children to sit with their parents is encouraged, but a nursery or "cry room" is sometimes necessary, so long as parents do not use it as an escape from responsibility. The main point to remember concerning children in the church meetings is that God has given the responsibility of training children to the parents and that is the position taken here.

Getting an early start on training children and having them trained to sit through a church meeting at an early age is certainly a realistic goal. But realistically, we haven't all done that and there will always be those coming into the church who have not. There are also

cases, such as single parents with more than one child, where parents need help. Having an alternative for the children is a way we can minister to the children and serve one another.

### **Conclusion**

The Church is not a building nor is it a gathering on Sunday morning. It is a living functioning body that operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week. It is in our daily lives that we will have the most profound impact on our children and mold their attitudes about God and Christianity. It is how we train our children in their day to day lives that will make the difference. If our home lives are in order, then the gatherings of the church will be beneficial to all.

---

For other materials by Brad Sherman, please visit our web site at  
[www.GetPurpose.org](http://www.GetPurpose.org)

---

This book is available for download free of charge as a .pdf file at [www.getpurpose.org](http://www.getpurpose.org).  
It may be copied and distributed, but we ask that the title and copyright pages be included.  
Quotes and excerpts may be used as long as the source is properly footnoted.